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# *The Program for The* Progress report • 1959

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## **GREAT PLAINS**



Okla. 10-983-- Old field, unsuited for crops, eroded and covered with grass and weeds of little value for livestock, is seeded with good range grass varieties on the L. S. Woodbury farm in Beaver County, Okla., under Great Plains Conservation Program plan. Woodbury plans return of 994 cropland acres to grass through GPCP and Conservation Reserve Programs.

Developed in recent years to help solve recurring problems caused by harsh climatic conditions, the Great Plains Program offers farmers and ranchers of this 10-state region aid in stabilizing their operations.

Wise land use, soil and water conservation, and improvements in management practices are the core of the program.

If the objectives of the Great Plains Program can be attained there should never again be cause for emergency expenditures on the scale made necessary by the drought of the mid-1950's--between June, 1953 and March, 1957 the Federal government spent \$207 million for disaster relief and extended \$216 million in loans through emergency credit programs in the Great Plains States.

Farmers and ranchers cooperating in the Great Plains effort are aided by programs for soil and water conservation, research, credit, crop insurance, market reporting, education and information. They and men of Federal and state agencies and land-grant colleges realize that success will lead to economic stability and protection of the

land in the designated Great Plains area. Included are 422 counties covering 55 percent of the area of Montana, the Dakotas, Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Progress on the Plains is apparent in conservation work now underway. Prompted by the second anniversary of the first Great Plains Conservation Program contracts, here is a review of the various conservation programs in the region.

Units of local government, the Soil Conservation Districts have taken an active part in conservation work since the first districts were formed in 1937. Most of the field work of SCS technicians has since been scheduled through these districts, with technical aid being provided for working out basic farm conservation plans, and the application of practices.

In the 10 Great Plains States 861 districts on June 30 had more than a half million cooperators operating 309 million acres. They had 386,000 basic conservation plans on complete farms and ranches totaling 206 million acres.

**U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**Office of Information**

**Picture Story No. 123**  
**February 1960**

*Magazines and newspapers may obtain glossy prints of any of these photographs from the Photography Division, Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. Others may purchase prints (8 x 10) at \$1.00 each from the same address.*



The 422 counties in the area authorized for the Great Plains Conservation Program is about 93 percent covered by 469 soil conservation districts.

The Agricultural Conservation Program with cost-sharing, the Farmers Home Administration through loans for soil and water conservation improvements and a special Great Plains credit program, and the Conservation Reserve have aided farmers cooperating in SCD programs and others in their efforts to conserve and better utilize the soil.

The drought of the 'Fifties speeded up the introduction of the Nation's first conservation program designed to meet the needs of one geographic region. This is the Great Plains Conservation Program, authorized in July, 1956 as Public Law 1021, 84th Congress. Administered by the Soil Conservation Service, the program is unique in that cost-sharing contracts are based on complete conservation plans for an entire farm or ranch unit. These plans are made by the farm operator in cooperation with local SCS technicians. Contracts are made for 3-to 10-year periods, and funds are obligated to meet annual expenditures under the completion schedules.

From the signing of the first Great Plains Conservation Program contracts on December 19, 1957, until December 31, 1959, a total of 3,842 basic plans were written. Federal cost-shares of \$19,376,147 were obligated to assist with conservation practices and management required for 10,614,912 acres.

It strengthens the programs of the local soil conservation districts and other government programs through emphasis on the need to adopt all conservation measures necessary for continued successful operation of Great Plains lands.

Other Federal government programs for conservation and their contribution helping farm and ranch operators to improve agriculture in the Great Plains are:

The Agricultural Conservation Program last year assisted 242,424 farmers in practices and work on 35 percent of the farmland in the 10 Great Plains States. The ACP share of the cost was \$60 million. Farmers supplied about an equal amount in the form of cash, labor, conservation



materials and use of equipment to apply conservation practices to about 16 million acres, plus the building of 37,000 ponds and dams, and other practices contributing to better land use.

The Conservation Reserve Program to reduce surplus crop production and protect land had retired 12 million acres from cultivation in the 10 states by 1959. Of this total, nearly 8 million acres are in the 422 Great Plains counties. About 98 percent of this land is to be returned to protective grass cover through 3-to 10-year contracts. Payments for withdrawing this acreage from production of crops amount to about \$90 million annually.

A brief resume of Farmers Home Administration experience in carrying on a credit program developed especially for hard-hit counties in six Great Plains States during the critical drought period indicates the ability of farmers to resume profitable operation. By July 1, 1959, nearly 30,000 of 35,544 Production Emergency loans were paid up, as were 1,632 of 2,010 Special Livestock loans.

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N. Dak. 602 -- Changes of salting places for cattle improve use of range by cattle on Donald Hall Ranch in Golden Valley County, North Dakota (above, right). Improvement of range management practices get emphasis in Great Plains Program.

N-27617 -- Earth fill on Highway 36 near Marysville, Kansas, serves as a detention storage dam to control flow of water to lands below. Built at a fraction of the cost of a bridge, it was a joint project of the Soil Conservation District and Highways Department.



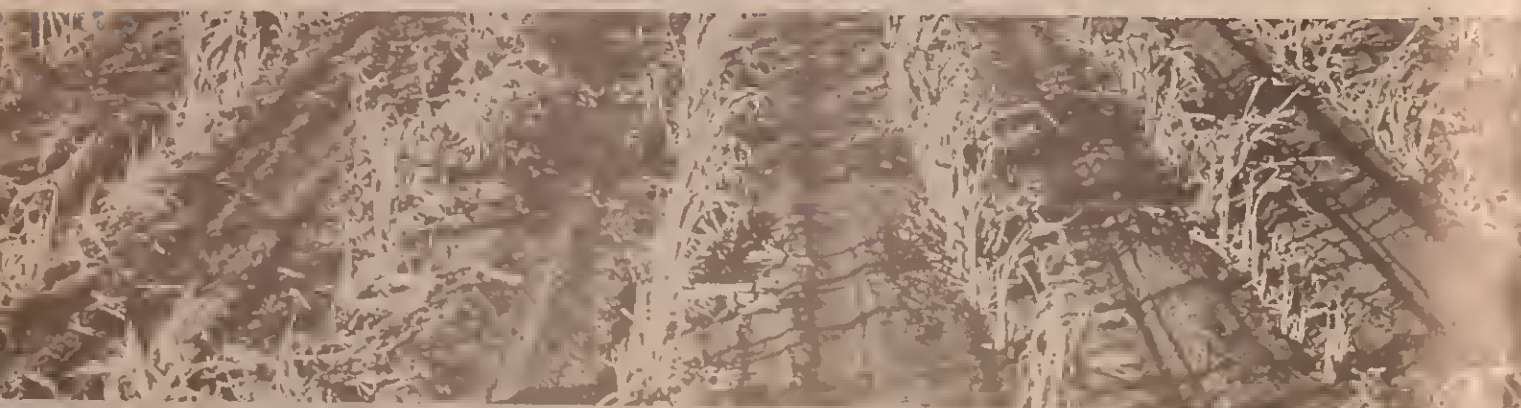
N-35143 -- State Experiment Stations and Agricultural Research Service have studies underway in land use changes, farm and ranch management, wheat production, grasshopper control, and (above) soil and water investigations. This control plot at the Northern Great Plains Field Station, Mandan, N. D., aids in determining effect of maximum water use and conservation measures in comparison with various other systems.

Tex. 49-373 -- Yucca spraying on the Salton Higgins Ranch near Dalhart, Texas, is undertaken under GPCP plan to increase grass production for cattle. Sage and other brush that have invaded ranges in the Plains also are being destroyed in effort to improve livestock carrying capacity.

N-19921 -- Protective temporary cover for seeding grass under a Conservation Reserve contract was provided (below) by sorghum crop that failed on land near Baise City, Okla. Okla. 10-984 -- Four grass drills (below, right) speed seeding of native grass varieties that will replace low value three-awn grass that covered this field after cropping attempts were abandoned. GPCP plan on this Beaver County, Okla., farm provides for return of large acreage to pasture for use of livestock.



N-27569 -- Seven-year old windbreak on the Bill Arnstein farm, Clay County, Kansas, is flourishing. Forest Service research aids plantings of trees by determining varieties adapted to Plains conditions.







Okla. 10-985--Stockwater pond being constructed on L. S. Woodbury farm, Beaver County, Okla., will permit more efficient use of grass for livestock. Area above pond is to be improved by seeding of grass. Once in cultivation, it led to silting-up of earlier stockwater pond here.



N-12797--Rancher J. C. Whitley discusses ranching problems with FHA County Supervisor John Goodnight in Baca County, Colorado. Whitley obtained a special livestock loan from FHA late in 1953 when severe drought and feed shortage threatened his herd and ranch. He repaid loan in November, 1956, has since enlarged his ranch.



Wyo. 703--Blow-out area in abandoned field being returned to range use on Darl Hacker place in Goshen County, Wyoming, is examined by owner, his son, Rodney, and SCS worker Ted Hood. This problem spot was later leveled, reseeded to grass after cover was established, in work under GPCP plan.



N-27590--Grassed waterway with concrete drop structure is typical of method used to ease water from fields without danger of gully formation when sudden, heavy showers sweep over Plains. ACP aided in establishing this waterway and structure on the O. P. Peterson farm, Republic County, Kansas.



N-35144--Grass seeded on Conservation Reserve acreage can make growth like this with good moisture conditions. E. V. Quattlebaum of Donley County, Texas, established grass on over half of his cotton and grain producing cropland after entering the Conservation Reserve Program in 1957.



N-27567--Stock water dam serves cattle on Orville Hughes farm, Clay County, Kansas. Development of adequate water facilities for livestock plus erosion control and moisture conservation structures aid Plains area farmers in developing management systems to withstand drought.